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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

MONDAY, March 17, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GARDEN NOTES FOR MID-MARCH." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Publications free to home gardeners while the supply lasts: "Useful and Ornamental Gourds," Farmers' Bulletin 1849.

--ooOoo--

March is a month full of traditions. March -- the month of wind, and house cleaning - the lion and the lamb, and good old St. Patrick.

Speaking of St. Patrick and his shamrock, here's an idea that came in the mailbag this week. A clever woman writes that early in March she plants white clover seed in little flower pots. If she has time to paint the pots green, so much the better. Anyway, along about the seventeenth of the month, she has a bright growth of clover looking for all the world like shamrock from the old country to give her friends for their St. Patrick's Day dinner tables. She also plants white clover seed in the soil around her house-plants. The fresh green clover looks like spring on the window sill and gathers nitrogen to help winter-weary house-plants.

Speaking of white clover reminds me of the lawn. If you want clover in your lawn this summer, sow it early even if you live up where March winds blow and there is plenty of snow. You can sow clover before the frost is out of the ground. The rather heavy seeds will lie on the surface until the thaws and rains work them down into crevices where they can start growing. A couple of weeks later than clover you can sow grass seed. Of course, you know fall is the best time to put in lawns. But if you didn't give the lawn attention last fall, put in seed early this spring, and give the lawn a top dressing of good plant food, too.

March is not only the traditional month for house-cleaning. It is also the month for garden cleaning. As the weather warms up, begin taking the winter covers

off your roses, and your perennial bed, and your strawberry patch. But remove the covers little by little if you live where a late frost is likely to catch you unawares. Take a walk around your garden and see where vines need tying up, broken branches need cutting off, and overgrown shrubs need pruning. These are jobs to get done before growing starts. Early spring is a good time to prune all shrubs except those that bloom in spring or early summer. Trim these after they bloom. Now is the time, too, when you can repair trellises and garden furniture, and do some paint jobs here and there.

Just one precaution about the garden clean-up. Be careful not to injure young shoots of plants in raking up or cultivating the perennial bed or the garden where bulbs are growing. A misstep or careless yank with the rake may do serious damage. If you are planning to move established plants like peonies or iris, don't be too early about it. Wait until they are up far enough so you are sure of their exact location.

Another thing you can do on your walk around the garden is to notice where the winter freezes and thaws have pushed shrubs and plants out of the soil. As soon as the frost is out of the ground, push these plants back in the ground. Some gardeners wear soft moccasins for this job and do the pushing and firming with their feet.

Don't mourn because you forgot or didn't have time to set out trees or shrubs last fall. Early spring is a perfectly good time to put them in. Just remember that evergreens should go in before their new spring growth gets underway, and other shrubs and trees should be set out before their first leaf-buds open.

Sweet peas for bloom and green peas for the dinner table are some of the first seeds that can go into the ground outdoors in the spring. And March is usually the month to plant them. In very northern States, you'll plant peas at the very end of the month. Farther South they can go in earlier. Success with

either sweet peas or vegetable peas depends a great deal on their getting an early enough start so they can grow large deep roots while the weather is still cool. Peas need rich feeding. Be sure the ground where you plant them is loamy soil containing plenty of well-rotted manure.

How do you know when the ground is warm enough to work in? Squeeze a little soil in your hand. If it falls apart slowly, it is ready, and in the condition the scientists call "friable."

March is not a bit too early to think about blooms for your outdoor window boxes and annual bed. You'll be starting vegetable seeds in boxes in the house this month. You can also start flower seeds like petunias, morning glory, larkspur, nasturtium and other favorites.

March is almost the last call for those garden bulletins you are going to want so much from now on. You can send a postcard right now to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., for bulletins on annual and perennial garden flowers. By the way, wouldn't you like to raise some gourds this year? The Department has a new bulletin telling all about useful and ornamental gourds. It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1849. As long as the free supply lasts, a free copy is yours for the asking. Write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the bulletin on useful and ornamental gourds, No. 1845, or bulletins on annuals, perennials, or the home vegetable garden.

That's all the garden news for today. More next Monday.

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